



# Vital Signs 2020

[www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](http://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk)





# Vital Signs 2020

## What is Vital Signs?

Vital Signs® MK is an annual publication designed to round up the most current research on the communities of Milton Keynes and present it in an easy to read summary of the longer report (available from our website [mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](http://mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk)).

Vital Signs is an international initiative supported by many UK Community Foundations. It aims to identify significant research that reflects the vitality of Milton Keynes measuring several areas critical to the quality of life in the city.

This year, we report on four areas of Vital Signs: Diversity; Health and Wellbeing; Poverty and Disadvantage; Crime and Safety. These areas had been selected prior to the Covid-19 pandemic as areas of concern from the 2019 report however with lockdown their relevance has become even more significant.

The areas covered by the Report do not stand in isolation, so this year to show how the areas intersect, we have added some additional statistics around Diversity to each of the other areas.

## Who are MK Community Foundation?

Established in 1986, Milton Keynes Community Foundation is an independent charity working for and at the heart of Milton Keynes. As a team, we are devoted to transforming lives and strengthening our society through various grant giving and philanthropic initiatives, with a vision to support and engage with the diverse community that surrounds us.

It is our mission to connect people with resources, skills, and ideas to enrich lives and create positive growth for Milton Keynes and we achieve this with the help of our donors. We believe in supporting the growth and development of our local voluntary, community and cultural sector, inspiring giving to our communities and improving the lives of the most disadvantaged.





# DIVERSITY

UK Equality and Diversity legislation identifies nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; race (including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality); religion or belief (including lack of belief); sex; sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity.

Milton Keynes has a diverse and growing population, with nearly 20% of people over 16 years old belonging to an ethnic minority, as compared to 14% across England as a whole. The figures are higher for school age children, which stands at nearer 37%. Over the next 5-10 years, Milton Keynes will celebrate a much more culturally and diversely rich community.

For this report, we have concentrated on Race, Gender and Age and how Covid has impacted on these characteristics. The issues raised as a result of the Black Lives Matter movement has brought to the forefront many of the issues of social injustice experienced by the BAME community. Some of these issues have been included in other sections of the Report, to show the influence of intersectionality.

## Vital thinking

- How can we ensure we offer equitable and meaningful opportunities for all members of our community?
- How do we as a community support black school students, particularly boys, to fully achieve their potential?
- How should we further support young people to access training, education or employment?

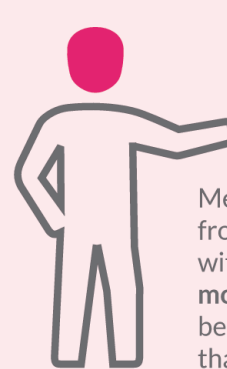


## Vital Action - Friends of the Caribbean

FOTC provide supplementary education for black ethnic minority and disadvantaged students helping to support academic achievement and encourage aspiration. During lockdown, there was a need to change the tutoring and mentoring support to an online platform and the need for the supplementary school became more urgent as students had less support from traditional education.



## Vital Statistics

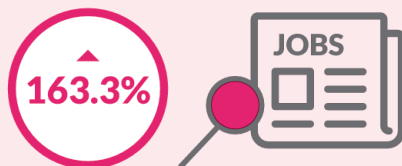


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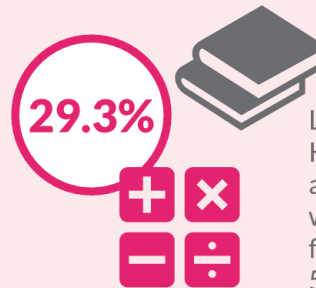
Men are more at risk of dying from Covid-19 than women, with black men being **2 times more likely** and Asian men being 1.5 times more likely than their white counterparts.



In Milton Keynes, **37%** of children in secondary school are from ethnic minority backgrounds. This is more diverse than England as a whole (25.8%).



Between March and May 2020, the number of 16-24 year olds claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, due to unemployment, **rose by 163.3%**.



Last year, **29.3%** of black students in Milton Keynes achieved grade 5 or above in Maths and English GCSEs, compared to 38.2% of white pupils. Results were particularly poor for black boys, with just 25.5% gaining grade 5 or above in English and Maths GCSEs.



# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Health and Wellbeing is a very broad category that includes both the physical and mental health of people and the factors that affect their wellbeing.

A government survey suggests that 50% of all adults had a high level of anxiety in the first week of lockdown. In 2019, Vital Signs reported that two big predictors of lifelong health are levels of physical activity and loneliness. In 2019, we had highlighted that nationally, young people and older people were getting lonelier. These are also the groups probably affected more by imposed isolation and limited physical activity during lockdown. In the initial weeks of lockdown, many people were separated from their support networks making issues such as depression and anxiety more heightened.

## Vital Thinking

- How can we build on the way communities came together to support the more vulnerable during lockdown?
- Since physical activity is important for good mental health, how do we encourage children to develop good habits for the future?
- As a result of the pandemic, anxiety has increased amongst the general population, how do we reassure and build resilience?

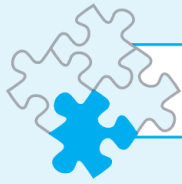


## Vital Action – Youth information Service (YiS)

YiS provide free and confidential British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy accredited counselling for young people aged 11-21 in Milton Keynes. They work with a range of issues including anxiety, depression, anger, recovery from abuse, family problems, relationship difficulties and many more. As lockdown started, they identified the need for online mental health and wellbeing support for young people with existing mental health difficulties. With a grant from Milton Keynes Community Foundation they were able to respond quickly to set up an online messaging service whereby their team of highly skilled counsellors and wellbeing coaches were on hand to provide advice and guidance. This service proved to be popular, with daily messages from young people seeking help on a range of topics including anxiety, friendship breakdowns and returning to education fears.



# Vital Signs 2020



## Vital Statistics

180



YiS Milton Keynes had the most referrals for counselling ever recorded over a 3-month period (April – June 2020), with 180, compared to the 86 they received in 2019 over the same period.



153%

Age UK MK saw an increase of 153% (23 to 58) in their befriender service between March and June 2020, with many callers expressing feelings of loneliness.

82



England was in complete lockdown for 82 days from 23rd March 2020, before we could form a support bubble with one other household.

79%

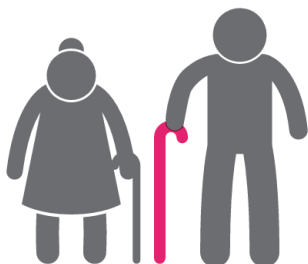


The results of a Mind (Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes) survey suggest the top three concerns making adult mental health worse during Covid 19 are: being unable to see family, friends or partners that they didn't live with (79%), feeling anxious about family or friends getting coronavirus (74%), and not being able to go outside except for essential reasons (73%).



## DIVERSITY

8x



The risk of dying from COVID-19 rises sharply with age because immune systems tend to deteriorate. On top of this, older people are more likely to have chronic conditions, for example the mortality rate from Covid-19 in England and Wales at age 80–84 is about eight times greater than at age 60–64.



44%

Nationally, there was a 44% increase in calls to suicide prevention helplines in the first 3 months of lockdown from members of the LGBTQ+ community.



# DISADVANTAGE AND POVERTY

Relative poverty has been redefined and the threshold is now set at a 55% median\* of total available resources.

A key principle of the new measure is that poverty should be related to the extent to which people have the resources to engage adequately in a life regarded as the norm in society. Previously, it was based on income versus expenditure, however this did not consider that some families had access to resources such as savings. The full effect of the lockdown on employment, particularly amongst young people, will not become evident until the Government job retention scheme ends in October 2020.

## Vital thinking

- Between March and May 2020, the number of people in Milton Keynes claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, because they were looking for work, rose from 4,495 to 10,520 people - a 100% increase. How is this going to affect poverty in Milton Keynes over the next few years?
- Lockdown has proved positive for rough sleepers under the Covid rough sleeper protocol: 127 people at risk of rough sleeping have been given emergency accommodation. What will happen to these people as lockdown is lifted?
- From our research, the negative effects of lockdown on the employment of women with children has been greater than for men with children. How can we, as a community, support women who are often the pivot point of a family?



\*the middle value in a data set

## Vital Action – Foodbank Xtra

At the start of lockdown, the Foodbank experienced a sharp increase in demand for food parcels. The usual sources for referrals and the limit of 6 weeks support was no longer fit for purpose. In conjunction with MK council, Foodbank Xtra was formed, using closed council venues to set up smaller collection points and redeploying some staff and volunteers to become delivery drivers for those shielding. The traditional methods of food supply from donations dried up with shortages at supermarkets. Milton Keynes Community Foundation were delighted to be able to provide an emergency grant to enable them to purchase food direct from wholesalers.





## Vital Statistics

# Vital Signs 2020

11,400

MK Foodbank provided **11,400 food parcels in 2019**, equivalent to 950 per month. Between March and July 2020, they gave out over 12,400 food parcels, an average of 2480 every month.



bottom 2%



The latest Index of Multiple Deprivation, published in 2019, suggests that:

- Eight areas of Milton Keynes are within the **10%** most deprived in England.
- Two areas of Milton Keynes are among the **2%** most deprived in England.
- Milton Keynes is ranked 23rd out of all 317 local authorities in England for barriers to housing and services; it sits within the **10%** most deprived areas when being assessed on indicators such as housing affordability, overcrowding and homelessness.

10,900



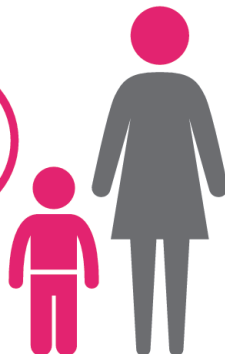
Overall, an estimated **10,900 17.7% of children are living in poverty**, although some areas of Milton Keynes show child poverty rates as high as 32%.



## DIVERSITY

1.5

Women with children are **1.5 times more likely** than men with children to have lost their job (England).



71.8%



The employment rate for women in Milton Keynes was **71.8%** last year, compared to 84.7% for men, showing there was already a gap before the Covid-19 pandemic.



# CRIME AND SAFETY

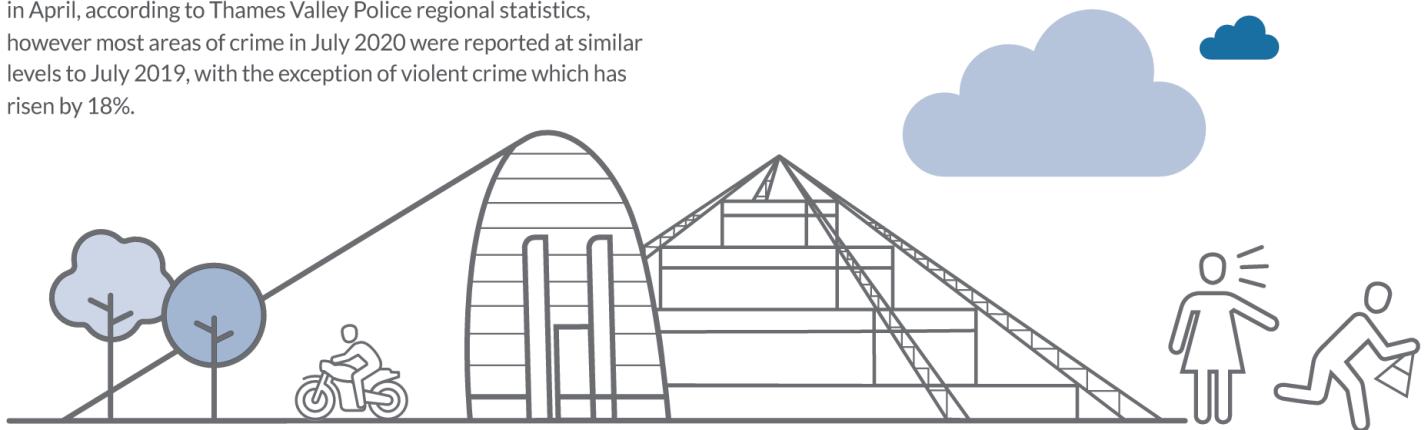
This theme looks at local and national trends in crime from Home Office and police data.

In 2019, we highlighted an increase in crime and talked about ways in which we can feel safer in our homes. Ironically, the figures we have focussed on this year show that, for some people, home is not a safe place and lockdown has put additional strains on relationships. The local statistics only tell part of the story since domestic abuse and sexual violence victims may often be afraid or reluctant to come forward.

Last year, we reported on the increasing gang related crimes, county lines and increase in knife crime. To date, there is limited data on the effect of lockdown on these issues. The restrictions in movement imposed in March led to an overall drop in crime in April, according to Thames Valley Police regional statistics, however most areas of crime in July 2020 were reported at similar levels to July 2019, with the exception of violent crime which has risen by 18%.

## Vital thinking

- Last year we asked the question, 'How can we, as a community, shed light on the issues surrounding domestic abuse so actions can be developed to start to address this issue?' This year, addressing this question is even more relevant and urgent.
- Violent crime is still an issue in parts of Milton Keynes. How can we work with our law enforcement agencies to make our streets safer?
- The Vital Thinking event held in December 2019 highlighted the need for early intervention and education for both children and parents – how do we make useful partnerships to enable this change?



## Vital Action – MK Act

MK Act is a charity which supports local families in fear from abuse, by providing an Emergency Refuge, offering counselling and signposting additional support services. When the national press reported increasing levels of domestic abuse, MK Act wanted to make sure that as many people as possible were aware of their service. The Emergency Refuge was full, so they needed funds to be able to respond to emergency situations for families in crisis. Through two emergency grants, Milton Keynes Community Foundation was able to support a media awareness campaign and provide the additional funds to support other families in crisis.





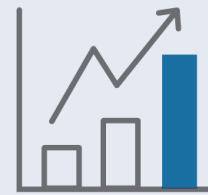


## Vital Statistics

# Vital Signs 2020



Between April and June 2020, Aylesbury Vale and Milton Keynes Sexual Assault Support Service saw 53 referrals, compared with 35 for the same period last year. **This is a 51% increase.**



Thames Valley Police reported that violent crime is still the highest issue, with **6565 cases reported in July 2020** compared to 5542 in July 2019 - an increase of 18%.



The period April - July 2020 compared with April 2018 - March 2019 saw an increase in **Domestic Violence from 2.6 to 10.7 per 1000 population** or household according to Thames Valley Police data.



In the last quarter of 2019, **12%** of those who approached MK Council for support cited domestic violence as the reason they became homeless or at risk of homelessness.



## DIVERSITY



According to the Office of National Statistics, in the year ending March 2019, **the majority of victims in domestic abuse-related prosecutions were female (75%)**; 16% of victims were male and in 10% of cases the sex of the victim was not recorded.



Citizen:MK, in a Vital Thinking event with 6 members of the Syrian refugee community settled in Milton Keynes, highlighted **digital poverty as a real issue** to their young people's education during lockdown.



LOOKING AHEAD



# Vital Signs 2020

This snapshot of Milton Keynes provides initial data on some of the issues arising from lockdown. This has already provided Milton Keynes Community Foundation with insights into where our funding can be most effective. Our Emergency Fund was launched on 20 March 2020 and to date we have provided over £500,000 in grants to more than 110 groups. We now move into the Recovery phase of our funding, where we will need to support the community and voluntary organisations who have been affected by lockdown but provide essential services to the most vulnerable in our community.

We will continue to facilitate Vital Thinking Events throughout 2020/21 to inform our grant making. If you are interested in taking part in any of these events, please register your interest by emailing [info@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](mailto:info@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk).

We can only continue to fund these vital projects thanks to our fundholders, members, corporate supporters and the generous donors who responded to our appeal. We still need your support to enable us to deliver our recovery funding. If you want to get more involved, please email [giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](mailto:giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk).

## Thank you to all those who have helped to produce this report.

### Staff at MK Community Foundation

#### Volunteer contributors:

Rose Ashbourn; Nigel Hicks; Niquita Cole, Jenni Ferrans and Vasco Fernandes.

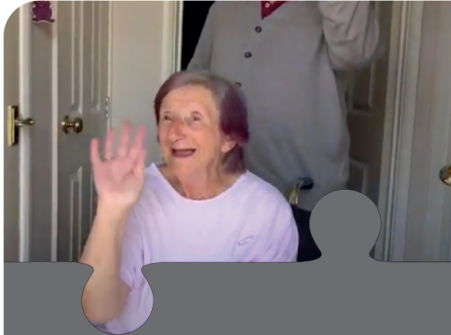
#### Critical Friends:

Sue Burke - MK Act; Louisa Hobbs - Into the Community (MK Foodbank); Fidele Mutwarasibo; Caroline Odjidja - Age UK; Carol Older - AVMKSAASS; Hayley Mattacks - MIND BLMK; TJ Richards - Q:Alliance; Denise Niel - MK Money Lifeline and Tessa Cox - MK Money Lifeline.

#### Video/Production:

Michelle Smyth - YiS; Beth Timms - MIND; Wain McIntosh - FOTC; Louisa Hobbs - MK Foodbank; Johnny Fulton - Fox Wylie; Kelly Shipp - Fox Wylie and Matt Worthington from Storm Videos.

# EMERGENCY APPEAL CASE STUDIES



Dreamsai were funded to adapt their model of delivering 'home cooked food' to that of supplying essential item packs. They aimed to double their efforts and deliver to those over 65s who were self-isolating two days a week, working in conjunction with the Foodbank.



As a result of the funding from Milton Keynes Community Foundation, Puzzle Centre has been able to provide a weekly support telephone call to parents and teletherapy sessions for children from a Specialist Teacher and Occupational Therapist.



As a direct result of the funding, The Lewis Foundation have extended their usual service and created a self-isolation pack, containing items for both physical and mental wellbeing for adult cancer patients.



The funding from Milton Keynes Community Foundation meant access to technology for MacIntyre. The purchase of iPads has meant that those they support can not only see their friends and family, but also access online activities and virtual groups to take part in some of their normal learning activities.



Funding received allowed Future Wolverton to take activities, such as their Sewn Together project, into local homes and enabled those wishing to take part to stay connected; delivering a much needed distraction of everything that has been going on in the world.



Funding meant that Sands were able to develop an urgently required toolkit of guidance and compliance, enabling bereaved parents and families in Milton Keynes to access vital bereavement support services online.

More case studies can be found on our website at [www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](http://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk)

We are always looking for ways to improve and develop our Vital Signs report, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to participate in future Vital Signs research.

### Join the conversation

Get involved and have your say on the findings in this Vital Signs report



Tweet your #vitalsignsMK thoughts to @MKComFoundation



Send an email to [giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk](mailto:giving@mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk)



Send a letter to MK Community Foundation, Acorn House, 381 Midsummer Boulevard, MK9 3HP



Call us on 01908 690276 – We'd love to talk more about Vital Signs with you!



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